



Library & Information History Group

News from the Chair

Welcome to the summer issue of the LIHG newsletter. I am delighted to see fascinating articles on the Alpine Club Library and on Downside Abbey in Bath. The Alpine Club Library has survived the golden age of climbing to maintain an impressive library, as well as artwork and photography. Venessa Harris outlines her doctoral research on the collection at Downside Abbey, whose library has evolved over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries from a collection scattered across rooms and cupboards to the purpose-built library that is now open to the public. I am also pleased to see a review of Bob Duckett's work on the history of Bradford Free Libraries. I have read some of Bob's work on Bradford libraries before, and know how valuable it is as a record of the development of British public libraries.

There are a few important announcements. We are really excited for an upcoming LIHG conference in association with Archives of Natural History, the journal of the Society for the History of Natural History. The conference will take place at the Linnean Society on 4th October, and the call for papers is open until 15th July. Please have a look at the full details in this newsletter, and consider submitting a proposal. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please take a look at the details of our bursaries and awards at the back of the newsletter. In addition, there are currently two vacancies on the LIHG committee, for Social Media Officer and for Marketing Officer. I have discovered for myself how rewarding it is to work with such lovely colleagues. Please consider joining us. Any queries, please get in touch with me at kathryn.peak@stx.ox.ac.uk.

Kathryn Peak

Chair, CILIP Library & Information History Group

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Library in Focus: **The Alpine Club Library**



Figure 1: The reading room at Saville Row, sketched by Hanslip Fletcher. Image courtesy of The Alpine Club.

In 1972, at the rate of £2,000 a year, Mr TW Summers became the first professional librarian of the newly formed Alpine Club Library Ltd. He was employed to put in good order the library of the Alpine Club, which comprised some 10,000 volumes and had grown beyond the ability of the club volunteers and Honorary Librarian to organise.

The Alpine Club Library did not spring into existence in 1972. The Alpine Club itself was formed in 1857 when a group of gentlemen concerned with Alpine climbing and mountaineering got together to form a club that would enable them to share information and dinners. Ladies weren't admitted to the club until 1974. The Ladies Alpine Club was formed in 1907 as a result and in 1975 it merged with the Alpine Club.

The newly formed Alpine club took rooms in 8 St Martin's place and a library was soon

formed. The Alpine journal of 1872 refers to the "unsatisfactory state of the Library" and the difficulty members had in accessing it. A possible clue to the reason for the sorry state of the library might be found in the Members List for 1881 which included a new rule 'No book or publication shall be taken away from the Club rooms'. 1881 also marks the first listing of an Honorary Librarian in the Members Handbook – a Mr F Pollock. Pollock says in his introduction to the 1888 catalogue of the Alpine Club Library that he succeeded 'Mr C Tuckett', so he wasn't the first Hon. librarian. He was, however, the first to begin publicising the library beyond the club. He presented a paper on the Alpine Club Library to a meeting of the Library Association in 1885. By the 1970s it was possible for any member of the public to consult the library on payment of a donation. Today it serves two main audiences, climbers coming to conduct research into routes and peaks and researchers looking for information on climbing history.

The Alpine Club and Library currently occupy two floors and the basement of an old brass furnishings manufacturer in Shoreditch. The relocation of the club from Mayfair to Shoreditch was mostly motivated by financial concerns. In 1895 the club moved to 23 Saville Row, where it stayed until 1937. In 1937 the premises were demolished and the club moved to South Audley Street. It remained here until the 1990s when it gave up its lease and moved to its present home. The earlier premises of the club were very much in keeping with the character of a gentleman's club, as exemplified by a series of illustrations done by Hanslip Fletcher of the Saville Row premises before they were demolished. The current premises are more workman-like but still retain a lecture room with space for exhibitions and even a bunk room for club members needing to stay overnight.

Exhibitions have been a core part of the Alpine Club since its early days. Painting and photography exhibitions were regularly held in the club's premises and while membership was generally reserved for those who could demonstrate considerable climbing ability there was also a category for artistic contributions. As a result the club had among its members many fine painters, including Gabriel Loppé. Loppé was famous for his alpine scenes and became the club's first French member in 1864. Leslie Stephens gave an account of climbing with Loppé and watching him paint in *The Playground of Europe* and the club owns several paintings by him, including 'View from Mont Blanc, Summer Sunrise' which hangs in the lecture room. The club's painting collection also includes works by Ruskin, Elijah Watson, Howard Somervell and other notable mountain painters. In recent years part of the collection has been made available to view on ArtUK and Watercolour World.



Figure 2: View from Mont Blanc Summit, Sunrise, by Gabriel Loppé (1869). Oil on canvas. Image courtesy of The Alpine Club Collection.

Photography exhibitions were also part of the culture of the club in the early period and have continued to the present day. The club's photography collection includes glass slides, photo albums and panoramas. Photographs by Vittorio Sella and Donkin are part of the early collection, showcasing some of the best in Victorian mountain

photography. The Ladies Alpine Club also counted several prominent photographers among its members including Lizzie Le Blond who was one of its founders. Slides and photographs taken by her became part of the club's collection when it merged with the Ladies Alpine Club. Much of the photo collection comprises photo albums detailing climbing trips in the Alps and further abroad as with the club archives these are not necessarily records of major figures but of club members enjoying their hobby and provide a valuable insight into how climbing has changed and evolved over the years.

The Archives of the club continue this theme. While much of the archive is concerned with the day to day business of the club there are also the personal papers of members. The application forms of members dating back to the club's formation are a valuable resource for anyone wanting to understand the development of climbing. But the archives also hold more personal accounts of climbing.



Figure 3: The Alpine Club archives today. Image courtesy of The Alpine Club.

Climbers' diaries have been donated by members since the early days of the club. Girdlestone's letters home, which recount his climbs in the Alps. But the club also holds more recent examples such as George Band's diaries which include his Everest diary from 1953. Alongside these accounts sits a collection of over fifty Swiss *füherbücher*.

These are the books kept by Swiss guides in which climbers would record their ascents and provide references for guides to show to other climbers. Part advertisement, part historical account, these small books show the variety of climbers in the Alps in the late 1800s.



Figure 4: The Alpine Club library today. Image courtesy of The Alpine Club.

The core of the library, though, is still the book collection. The book collection focuses on mountaineering and mountain culture. This ranges from climbing guides and maps through to books on swiss flora and the picturesque movement of the 1800s. The earliest volumes date from the 1600s. Much of the collection is focused on Alpine travel and includes Swiss almanacks, Balls guides and travellers accounts from the 1700 and 1800s. Over the years the library has been built through donations from members and the club has been fortunate that early members were often keen collectors of books. Today the focus is more narrowly on mountaineering literature but in the 1860s the club interpreted this more broadly as anything pertaining to a mountainous region.

By the 1970s the collection had become unwieldy, uncatalogued and in desperate need of someone to put it in order. Summers lasted two years before he left to pursue other interests and was replaced by Miss HR Smith 'formerly of the British Library'. Miss Smith was appointed to catalogue the

collection but her report of July 1975 notes 'fulfilling the other duties of the Librarian has sometimes severely restricted my output of this work. As well as dealing with readers in person far greater amounts of time can be spent in answering letters.' It is perhaps not surprising that the minutes of the October 1975 Library Council note that a new librarian, Mrs CR Ashton had been appointed.

The appointment of a professional librarian led to the production of a new printed catalogue in 1982. It wasn't a big seller as the club still has unsold copies in the basement, but it did publicise the library to other similar institutions both in the UK and overseas. It was the last printed catalogue to be produced, the current catalogue is online and accessible to both members and the public without the need to pay for a copy. The catalogue also meant the books were finally classified according to the classification scheme devised by Edward Pyatt and published in the Alpine Journal of 1969. This in house system endures to today and is a 3 digit system that focuses on geographical regions.

One of the main achievements of the library during this period was the Himalayan Index. The Index aims to be a record of articles associated with peaks, offering climbers a quick way of ascertaining if a peak had been climbed, finding out more about attempts and gathering general information. The index had its origins in a card index compiled by Bob Lawford, who was an Honorary librarian, but the eventual index was greatly extended by volunteers. It offered an invaluable shortcut to anyone planning expeditions in the days before internet access and searching the index was a core part of the library offer during the 1980s and 1990s. An

old version is currently available online while a new up-to-date index is in development.

Alongside the Himalayan Index the club also holds a substantial collection of expedition reports. The library is one of three in the UK to receive copies of Mount Everest Foundation reports. These are completed by any expedition which has received MEF funding and the club's collection has been key to the recent creation of a website allowing for online access to these. The reports date back to the 1960s and form a valuable history of the exploration and climbing funded by the foundation.

The library continues to be one of the major collections of mountaineering literature in the UK. Many of the mountaineering and climbing clubs in the UK have their own libraries or archives and there is also the Mountain Heritage Trust and the National Library of Scotland's specialist collection, so it is not the only collection of its kind. However, it is one of the few easily accessed by the public. In 1989 the then Chair of the library Council, Mike Westmacott, wrote 'We have the duty ... of keeping faith with the many people who have generously contributed to the library, making it the important collection we have today.'. This is still the ethos that guides the library and motivates us to promote the collection and encourage its usage and enjoyment.

Emma McDonald
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Book Review

150 Years of Bradford Free Libraries, 1872-2022

Bob Duckett, 150 Years of Bradford Free Libraries, 1872-2022 (Bradford Libraries, City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council, 2023). 115 pp. £9.99. ISBN 978-1-7390826-0-4 (paperback).

The publication of this accessible, extensively illustrated, and well produced book is timely, given that Bradford will serve as the UK's City of Culture in 2025. People in Bradford are aware not only of the breadth of the city's culture in a twenty-first-century pluralistic society but also the strength of its cultural heritage stretching back into the eighteenth century. However, those unaware of this cultural vibrancy and inheritance are perhaps seduced by the cliché that, as a former industrial centre, Bradford has suffered cultural impoverishment arising from its narrow pursuit of material progress and the poverty and social difficulties that accompanied it. In short, Bradford's cultural credentials have generally been under-appreciated or overlooked entirely.

The long and rich history of library provision in Bradford, which Bob Duckett's book expertly traces, contradicts this misguided perception. In the nineteenth century, the industrial towns of the north of England had a surprising number of libraries. Bradford's industrial expansion in the first half of the nineteenth century was matched by the growth of the middle classes, from substantial factory owners to the professions that serviced the

new enterprises. This new class formation had a thirst for information, 'whether technical information, comment on national and world affairs, market intelligence, politics, or cultural topics' (p. 8). There was also considerable interest in imaginative literature for recreational purposes.

In response to this demand, in Bradford as elsewhere, there existed before the arrival of a public library in the middle of the nineteenth century a rich tapestry of library provision consisting of social libraries of various kinds, including subscription, commercial-circulating, club-like proprietary and mechanics' institute libraries, as well as commercial newsrooms, book clubs, and the libraries of political and social societies and literary institutes. Bradford's library infrastructure ranged from the Bradford Library and Literary Institution (established 1774) to a mere one or two shelves of books offered for loan in retail outlets like stationers, haberdashers, tobacconists, and pharmacies. As key components of the public sphere, all these libraries could be categorised as 'public', but qualified as such essentially only for people who could afford them. Coverage of them, which forms the bulk of the opening chapter, would for some readers be the most interesting aspect of the book, given that for the 'uninitiated,' the history of libraries is taken to mean the history of public libraries.

The remaining six chapters of the book trace the history of Bradford's municipal public libraries in particular periods, arranged in chronological order. The exception to this arrangement is Chapter 6, which examines the story of outlying libraries in places such as Ilkley, Bingley, and Keighley before local government reorganisation in 1974 brought them under the umbrella of an enlarged

local authority, the Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

A Public Libraries Act of 1850 paved the way for the establishment of free municipal public libraries. The use of the word 'free', the author explains, was commonplace in this context because it served to distinguish municipal library provision from the fee-based social, or 'public', libraries that preceded it (and, for a while, until the competition from public libraries for some became too strong, ran alongside it). Some of the earliest adopters of the public libraries legislation were the industrial towns of the north, and Bradford continued this tradition when it adopted the legislation in 1871, a public library opening in the town the following year. There was widespread support in the city for the provision of a public library, but inevitably there was some opposition too: 'there were fears that the raising of a library rate would drive residents out of the borough; that money would be taken from the widow and the fatherless children; and that most library books would be beyond the comprehension of the great body of the working classes' (p. 17). There was also the fear that the public library would encourage the supply and reading of low-quality, sensationalist fiction.

Progress over the next 150 years is mapped out clearly. This is done without resorting to exhaustive detail, yet the narrative is well documented and professionally referenced. The major developments addressed include reference, lending, and outreach services; education and extension activities like public lectures and classes; and library buildings (there is notable coverage of the stunning concrete-and-glass, cliff-face central library opened in 1967). Librarians' bureaucratic practices and the role of certain influential librarians, not least the innovative Butler

Wood, who served as Chief Librarian for an incredible half a century, from 1875 to 1925.

In 1873, the year after Bradford opened its first public library, the city opened its magnificent new town hall. Clothed in a neo-Gothic style highly fashionable at the time, the building reflected the affluence (for some) of a city that had become one of the world's leading textile manufacturing centres. It was also symbolic of the confidence of the city's middle classes. In the 1970s-80s, a historical theory emerged that, contrary to the image of economic prosperity, in the late-Victorian period Britain's substantial middle class had, in fact, 'failed'. Failure was identified on two fronts. Firstly, many of the offspring of the pioneer industrialists opted to abandon industry, choosing careers in finance and trade (a phenomenon labelled 'gentlemanly capitalism'). Secondly, it was argued that, conforming to the stereotype of the philistine northern industrialist, the manufacturing elite showed little interest in culture. There was push-back on both fronts. Regarding culture, evidence was marshalled to show that the burghers and entrepreneurs of industrial towns, in fact, made a significant investment in learning, science, and the arts. That investment included the provision of public libraries in places like Bradford. The work of library services in Bradford over the past 150 years, which this book enthusiastically celebrates, helps counter the image of the north as a cultural wasteland. However, such counter-offensives, as it were, run the risk of fading away if cultural endeavours like that evident in the public library movement in Bradford are not offered protection from philistinism and the dangers of the market.

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CILIP LIHG conference 2024

Call for Papers: Libraries, Archives and Natural History

The 2024 CILIP Library & Information History Group conference will take place at the **Linnean Society** on **Friday 4th October 2024**, and will be held in association with *Archives of Natural History*, the journal of the Society for the History of Natural History.

The theme of the conference is 'Libraries, Archives and Natural History'. Proposals for twenty-minute papers are welcomed on any aspect examining Natural History within the history of libraries and archives. These proposals might address, but are not limited to, any of the following topics:

- The libraries and/or archives of individual naturalists
- The library, information and archival history of institutions and/or societies for the promotion of the study of Natural History
- The challenges of working with libraries and archives that have been disconnected from their associated specimen collections
- The historic impact of Library spaces on research/collaboration/advancement
- Historic information management in the study of Natural History
- The collection of natural history material in non-scientific libraries
- The role of libraries in disseminating popular natural history
- The place of the library as a targeted customer for natural history publishing
- The effect of the birth of digital publishing on library collecting of natural history materials.
- The effect of the digitisation of natural history material and digital citizen science projects on opening up library collections for historical enquiry

Proposals of up to 300 words should be submitted [via online form](#) by midday on Monday 15 July.

Presented papers will be considered for publication in either [Library & Information History](#) or [Archives of Natural History](#), depending on their topic, and brought together in a special joint virtual issue

By Lantern

Monastic Collecting at Downside Abbey



Figure 1: Photo of Downside Abbey. Courtesy of the author.

From before the early mediaeval period (c.500-1500 CE), the library in monasteries has been kept locked, with access to books restricted by the Abbot or Abbess. The library in monasteries could be a room, a cupboard, or a building, and before the early mediaeval period, it is likely that the monastery was built around this library, where the scriptorium, or place for scribes to work on copying manuscripts would have been. The organising of libraries (classification and cataloguing) was paramount to the work of monasteries with its purpose of education, hospitality and spreading of the missionary

word. In my doctoral research, by investigating how early monastic libraries collected, stored, and used their books, several findings have been made, including some discoveries about the meaning of books within a religious community.

Benedictine monks settled at Downside Abbey near Bath in 1814, which was originally the Old House built around 1700, and an older farmhouse. The monks commissioned new buildings immediately, and one of the first architects to be involved in making plans was A.W.N Pugin (1812-1852), however none of his plans came to fruition. In 1872 a commission was given to Dunn and Hansom

architects, who laid the first foundation stones in 1873. The monastery as it stands today was first occupied in 1876, when the library journey of this community of monks recommenced. It comprised the chapter house with a library, calefactory, and rows of monastic cells above. The library is the epicentre of the monastic mission with books as the tangible foundation of the community's spiritual development.



Figure 2: The octagonal library with panoramic windows reflecting the Abbey. Courtesy of the author.

Originally, the Downside Abbey 'library' spanned "no less than nine different rooms" of four floors of the monastery.¹ Sadly, the book collection that had been amassed in Douai, France, where the community originated from in 1606, had been scattered and lost following their exile from France during the French Revolution (1789-1799). The book collection at Downside however, continued to grow, and furthermore, in the early twentieth century a monastic librarian proposed plans for a separate library building. Dunn and Hansom's original plans had included an extension to the west wing of the monastery to be given over to a library. Prioritising a building for the library became more significant and in the 1960s,

Francis Pollen (1926-1987), architect, prepared plans for this after Dunn and Hansom's model of 1872. However, around 1963, this was abandoned in favour of a set of criteria laid out by Dom Philip Jebb (1932-2014). He had envisioned a separate library building with a reading room that the public could use.⁴ Jebb's plans included librarians' rooms, a cataloguing room, reading room, book stacks, in the form of a circular building. Finally, in 1970, despite Jebb's design of a circular building, Pollen's octagonal library was completed and described as a 'lantern' or 'beacon of learning'. In 1971, the books were moved from the monastery building where they had been stored in various rooms, cupboards, and attics, into the new library. It is this library that houses the full card catalogue in its own dedicated room. Within that card catalogue there is detail about the library's treasures that include some of the earliest Bibles printed in English, Books of Hours, medieval manuscripts, theological texts and much more, in an overall library of around 450,000 works. In 2013 the library was opened to the public, and in 2017 new panoramic windows were installed.



Figure 3: A view of part of the monastery built by Dunn and Hansom begun in 1873. Courtesy of the author.

It is a library cataloguer's role to research the provenance, bindings, bookplates, printers' devices and marginalia within special collections. In my study of a collection of sixteenth century books, I have had the privilege of handling primary source materials that represent the chronology of book development. This includes evidence of paper made from undyed linen at some of the first English paper mills, the gothic blackletter font, limp vellum bindings and pigskin binding over boards amongst others, early armorial stamps, and red sprinkled edges. It was common for these early books to have print errors in them of which there is also evidence; corrections made by either errata or a list of faults in printing at the end of the book, or by cancellandum, a part of a book pasted directly over the original text. Some of the primary sources have been repaired, and in newer bindings there are examples of dentelle decoration, gold tooled fillets, and the addition of many different bookplates. These elements of the book all provide a cornucopia of information that provide the cataloguer with not only when, but where the book was created, the printer (and the author), who has owned the book previously, or the library where it was previously shelved, and often the lifestyles or motivations of the previous readers.



Figure 4: Card catalogue in the octagonal library.
Courtesy of the author.

Using this book history, I am focusing on the significance of this sixteenth century collection of books that were produced during the Tudor reigns from Henry VIII to Elizabeth I, researching their position in material culture. This study looks at how the book as an object is a relic of the cultural beliefs and values of that period.

My research demonstrates the connection between monks and book collecting, the purpose of a monastic library, and its place within the pious lifestyle. It will contribute to the academic study of book history, bibliographical knowledge, and become a research resource for further scholarly endeavours.

References

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Venessa Harris
PhD Student, Aberystwyth University
Downside Abbey Library Fellow

James Ollé Awards

James G. Ollé (1916-2001) was an active teacher and distinguished writer in the field of library history; the Library and Information History Group has offered awards in his memory since 2002 with the intention of encouraging a high level of activity in library and information history. Individuals may apply for an award of up to £500 each year for expenses relating to a library history project.

Please note that the award is not intended to support conference attendance.

James Ollé Award recipients will be asked to write a report (maximum 1000 words) of the work undertaken for inclusion in the LIHG's Newsletter, and may be invited to present a short paper at an LIHG conference or meeting, such as the AGM.

To apply for the award, please send a short CV, statement of plans and draft budget to the LIHG's Awards Manager. Applications may be made throughout the year.

Dr Dorothy Clayton, Awards Manager, LIHG
Tel: 0161 826 3883; or 07769658649; Email:
dorothy.clayton@manchester.ac.uk

Library History Essay Award 2024

The Library History Essay Award is an annual prize for the best article or chapter on library history published in, or pertaining to, the British Isles, within the previous calendar year (i.e., 2023). Introduced in 1996, the award is organized and sponsored by the LIHG and aims to support the publication of research into library history in the British Isles. The prize is **£350**.

Submissions should contain original historical research and be based on original source materials if possible. Evidence of methodological and historiographical innovation is particularly welcome.

Authors may put themselves forward for the prize but may make only one submission per year. Any member of CILIP may also nominate a published essay for consideration. The entries will be identified and judged by a panel of three:

- Chair of the LIHG
- Awards Manager of the LIHG
- Additional assessor at the invitation of the LIHG Committee

Nominations and any queries should be sent to the Dorothy Clayton, Group's Awards Manager (see details to the left).

Deadline for submissions for Library History Essay Award 2024 is 30 September 2024.

Please Note: The article/book chapter must have been published in 2023

LIHG Committee Vacancies

The LIHG committee is proactive and enthusiastic in promoting the history of libraries and information and aims to organise visits, talks and events that attract a wide and diverse audience. The Group is made up of volunteers who meet 3-4 times per year (latterly, with at least two of these meetings online). The CILIP LIHG is looking to appoint two roles to the committee:

Social Media Officer

The Social Media Officer is responsible for the Group's Twitter and Facebook presence and works closely with the Marketing Officer.

Marketing Officer

The Marketing Officer is responsible for promoting the work of the group, working closely with the Social Media Officer, Newsletter Editor and Website Editor.

To apply, please send a one-page CV and short paragraph outlining your interest in the role to Kathryn Peak (Chair) at (kathryn.peak@stx.ox.ac.uk).

Back Matter

The LIHG newsletter is produced twice a year. It contains short articles, news items, exhibition and conference announcements, notices of awards and bursaries, and reports on conferences, exhibitions, and site visits. We also highlight a selection of new publications. We are always looking for feature articles in the field of library and information history; descriptions of little-known historic libraries; information about projects with a significant historical component; new resources (print and digital); news items; and calls for papers.

We also welcome reports on conferences on any subject in library and information history and reviews of exhibitions. Recent graduates are invited to submit brief descriptions of their research projects. Please contact the editor, Alex Kither, if you would like to have news, events, exhibitions or calls for papers included in the newsletter: lihgnewsletter@gmail.com

Proposals for feature articles (length of article max. 2000 words) and descriptions of graduate research projects (max. length 750 words) should be accompanied by a short CV. Deadlines for contributions:

11 October 2024 (Winter 2024)

23 May 2025 (Summer 2025)

Information about events, conferences and bursaries is also disseminated via the [CILIP website](#).

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